


## STATE OF OHIO

DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION  
AND CORRECTION

SUBJECT: <b>Asatru Religious Policy</b>	PAGE <u>  1  </u> OF <u>  8  </u> .  NUMBER: 72-REG-10
RULE/CODE REFERENCE:	SUPERSEDES: 72-REG-10 dated 01/05/15
RELATED ACA STANDARDS:	EFFECTIVE DATE: January 20, 2016
	APPROVED:  

**I. AUTHORITY**

This policy is issued in compliance with Ohio Revised Code 5120.01 which delegates to the Director of the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction the authority to manage and direct the total operations of the Department and to establish such rules and regulations as the Director prescribes.

**II. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to provide information and guidance to chaplains, administrators, and staff in managing and providing for the religious activities and practices of inmates in the custody of the Department.

**III. APPLICABILITY**

The policy applies to employees, independent contractors, and volunteers of the Department who provide or assist in providing religious services.

**IV. DEFINITIONS**

**Altar Cloth** - Used in rituals to cover the surface of the table or other surface in use.

**Asatru** - A Scandinavian religious practice (sometimes called Odinism) of worshipping Norse (Scandinavian) gods, chiefly Odin.

**Blot** - A ritual observance which includes drinking mead and consuming food, which may include some items obtained at the commissary.

**Gandr Staff** - A wooden stick inscribed with runes used for both personal and congregate worship.

**Gothi / Gythia** - Male / female priest of the Asatru faith.

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**Housing Area** - As used in this policy, “housing area” means either an inmate’s cell when in housing that has individual cells, or it means the inmate’s own bunk when the inmate is assigned to dormitory or open style housing.

**Non-Alcohol Mead Substitute** - Fruit juice purchased from the commissary serves as ritual mead in the institutions symbolizing fermented honey.

**Rune** - A stone or card representing the runic alphabet believed to have powers and used in divination magic.

**Rune Journal** - Scriptural book for practicing Asatruar, written in the practitioner’s own handwriting. Texts, rites, and prayers in languages other than English may require increased review and may be withheld for investigation and translation.

**Sumbel** - A congregate celebration, which includes drinking mead and offering toasts, boasts, oaths, stories, songs or poems in three rounds.

**Thor’s Hammer** - A religious object depicting the hammer of the Norse God Thor which is used as a symbol for the Asatru faith. Most commonly it is in the form of a medallion worn as a necklace. For congregate worship, it may be depicted as a three dimensional wooden carved object.

## V. POLICY

It is the policy of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) that inmates, who wish to do so, may subscribe to any religious belief they choose. Inmate religious practices, as opposed to belief, may be subject to reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions. Inmate participation in religious activities shall be voluntary. The opportunity for inmates to engage in particular religious practices shall be subject to the legitimate departmental or institutional interests and concerns, including security, safety, health, discipline, rehabilitation, order, and the limitations of and allocation of resources. This policy is intended to be permissive rather than restrictive. The observances and religious items listed are generally approved accommodations for qualified inmates wishing to practice the subject faith. Additional observances may be permitted pursuant to Department policy 72-REG-02, Religious Accommodations.

## VI. PROCEDURES

### A. Congregate Services

Worship - Inmates in the general population at an institution may participate in Asatru group worship services in accordance with the requirements for congregate services set forth in Department policy 72-REG-02, Religious Accommodations.

1. There are twelve (12) major Asatru religious holidays, one per month. To the extent possible, group worship services shall be scheduled to coincide with these days.
2. Asatru group worship services must be led by a DRC-approved member of the Asatru clergy or by a DRC-approved volunteer. Inmate led group worship services are prohibited.

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3. Group worship services may be monitored by DRC employees present during the services and also by means of electronic, audio, and video monitoring. The inability of DRC to make such a recording does not justify canceling any scheduled group study session.
4. Asatru inmates who desire to attend group worship services must obtain a pass from the Chaplain's office. Inmates who are not affiliated with the Asatru religion who desire to attend group worship services may do so; however, they must also obtain a pass from the Chaplain's office.
5. An Asatru inmate may wear a headband during a group worship service. An Asatru inmate may not wear the headband to or from the group worship service.
6. Each group service may include a blot and sumbel at the clergy member or volunteer's option. A feast may be included in the group worship service once per year, usually for the Yule high feast day. Feast items may be selected from items generally available on the food line. Items not available on the food line may be made available pursuant to DRC approval of a timely request for a specific accommodation.

#### **B. Religious Articles for Group Asatru Worship**

Asatru inmates in general population at an institution may use the following for items in Asatru group worship (Photographs of items #1-#5 and #9, are available in the law library):

1. **Ritual Bowl:** Asatru inmates may use a ritual bowl made of wood or clay. The ritual bowl shall be no larger than 6" wide and 2½" deep. The bowl may be brought to the institution by a DRC-approved leader of group worship. The bowl may include inscriptions, designs or runic characters, approved by DRC and placed there by either a vendor approved by DRC or by a DRC-approved outside clergy or volunteer.
2. **Oath Ring:** An Oath Ring shall be made of wood and no larger than 6" in diameter. An Oath Ring may include inscriptions, designs or runic characters, approved by DRC and placed on it by either a vendor approved by DRC or by a DRC-approved outside clergy or volunteer.
3. **Thor's Hammer:** The Thor's Hammer for group worship shall be made of wood and shall be no larger than 6" in height or width. The Thor's Hammer may include inscriptions, designs or runic characters, approved by DRC and placed on it by either a vendor approved by DRC or by a DRC-approved outside clergy or volunteer.
4. **Gandr Staff:** The Gandr staff shall be made of white cedar or comparable light wood, and shall not be larger than 13" x ½" x 5/16" with rounded, blunt ends. The Gandr Staff may include inscriptions, designs or runic characters, approved by DRC, and placed on it by either a vendor approved by DRC or by a DRC-approved outside clergy or volunteer.
5. **Ceremonial Candles:** A battery or wax candle of up to 12" long may be used during group worship. A candle may be lit subject to applicable fire regulations.

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6. Altar: Asatru inmates engaged in group worship may use the altar available in the religious services areas in each institution. If the altar is unavailable, a table, approximately three feet by three feet (3' x 3'), shall be provided by DRC.
7. Altar Cloth: An altar cloth large enough to cover the altar may be placed on the altar. The altar cloth shall be made of linen, silk or, comparable cloth material, and shall be white or beige. The altar cloth may include inscriptions, designs or runic characters approved by DRC and placed on it by either a vendor approved by DRC or by a DRC-approved outside clergy or volunteer. Any inscription, design or runic characters on an altar cloth shall be red, black or other color approved by DRC. The altar cloth shall be obtained from a DRC-approved vendor or may be brought to religious services at the institution by an approved member of the clergy or clergy volunteer.
8. Drinking Horn: The ceremonial Drinking Horn may be a cup made of wood or clay or may be a cow's horn hollowed out to become a vessel.
9. Non-Alcoholic Mead: Asatru inmates may use a non-alcoholic mead substitute comprised of fruit juice at group worship services.
10. Evergreen Twig: An evergreen twig may be brought to the religious service by a DRC-approved clergy volunteer for use in the service. A fresh twig approximately 6" long may be used.
11. Storage of Religious Articles for Group Worship: Articles approved by DRC for group worship may be stored in a designated locker box in the institution's religious services area, or may be brought to religious services at the institution by a DRC-approved member of the clergy or clergy volunteer leading a particular worship services.

### **C. Group Study**

Inmates in the general population at an institution may participate in Asatru group study sessions in accordance with the requirements for congregate services set forth in Department policy 72-REG-02, Religious Accommodations. Inmates not affiliated with the Asatru religion may also attend Asatru group study sessions. Inmates who desire to attend Asatru group study sessions must obtain a pass from the chaplain's office.

1. Asatru religious group study sessions shall be led by a DRC-approved member of the Asatru clergy or by a DRC-approved outside volunteer. Inmate led Asatru group study sessions are prohibited.
2. Asatru group study sessions may be monitored by DRC employees present during those sessions and also by means of electronic, audio and video monitoring. The inability of DRC to make such a recording does not justify canceling any scheduled group study session.
3. Asatru group study will be permitted once per month. Asatru group study may be held the same day as group worship or on other days based upon security and safety needs and the availability of institutional resources. Any request to schedule Asatru study groups on

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non-worship days are subject to the availability of DRC staff and other institutional resources.

#### **D. Individual Asatru Religious Exercise**

Individual Asatru religious practices include, but are not limited to, worship, prayer, meditation, rune casting, and personal feasting, within the Asatru inmate's personal housing area. An inmate's individual religious activities must not disrupt nearby activities.

1. Individual Ceremonial Feast: An Asatru inmate may engage in an individual ceremonial meal or feast in the inmate's cell or living area. All foods available in the commissary, including fruit juice, crackers, and cheese, shall be available to Asatru inmates to consume in their cells or personal housing as part of an individual religious ceremonial feast.
  - a. Yule Meal: May be eaten in the dining hall by general population Asatru inmates at a time that would not interfere with normal meal time. In the absence of an approved religious leader, this meal shall not be an opportunity for corporate worship or group religious activity.
  - b. Discreet personal prayers at the table are permitted. Prayers involving activities such as kneeling, audible chanting, or inmate led group activity, etc. are not permitted.
2. Non-Alcoholic Mead Substitute: An Asatru inmate may obtain fruit juice from the commissary to serve as ritual mead for purposes of personal religious worship.
3. Individual Meetings with Approved Clergy and Religious Volunteers: Asatru inmates may confer individually with approved members of the Asatru or other clergy. In the absence of the availability of an approved clergy, an Asatru inmate also may confer individually with approved outside Asatru religious volunteers in accordance with Department policy 76-VIS-01, Inmate Visitation.

#### **E. Religious Property for Individual Observance**

An Asatru inmate may possess or use the following religious articles for Asatru individual worship. (Photographs of example items for #1-#3, #5, #6, #8, and #9, are available in the law library). Unless otherwise specified, all items listed must be obtained from a DRC approved source.

1. Thor's Hammer Medallion: An Asatru inmate may possess one Thor's Hammer Medallion that may be on a chain or cord worn around the neck. The medallion shall not exceed two inches in length or width.
2. Rune Stone Set: An Asatru inmate may possess one Rune Stone set comprised of up to 33 tiles, each inscribed with a character from the runic alphabet. The Rune Stone set may include a tile with the single sowilo character, and shall not include tiles with the swastika or double sowilo runic characters. The Rune Stone set may include an instruction book, a casting cloth, and a cloth bag for storage. Each runic tile may be made

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of stone, bone or other suitable material approved by DRC and may be no larger than one inch or a quarter-dollar. The runic character inscribed on each tile may be either red or black.

3. Religious Literature: An Asatru inmate may possess one copy of The Poetic Edda, a recognized text for the Asatru faith, obtained from an approved vendor. The Poetic Edda does not have to be kept in the inmate's locker except at "pack up". Possession of additional religious books and publications, including additional copies of the Poetic Edda, is subject to Administrative Rule 5120-9-19, Printed Material, governing printed materials and other generally applicable rules and policies construed in light of RLUIPA.
4. Altar: An Asatru inmate may use his or her locker box as an altar for personal worship purposes. If an Asatru inmate does not have a locker box, he or she may use the writing surface in his or her cell as an altar.
5. Altar Cloth: An Asatru inmate may possess one altar cloth made of linen, silk, or comparable cloth material for use in covering the area used as a personal altar. The altar cloth shall be white or beige, may not be larger than 31"x 21", and may have an inscription, design, or runic characters placed there by a DRC-approved vendor. Any vendor's inscription, design, or runic characters is subject to DRC approval. Any inscription, design, or runic characters on an altar cloth shall be red or black. An Asatru inmate may not place any inscriptions, designs, or any writing on the altar cloth. The altar cloth may be placed flat on the inmate's personal altar during individual worship and may not be displayed at any other time. An Asatru inmate in possession of an altar cloth larger than 31" x 21" prior to the effective date of this policy may continue to possess the altar cloth but may not transfer it to another inmate. An Asatru inmate may use an unaltered, DRC-approved towel as an altar cloth.
6. Ritual Bowl: An Asatru inmate may possess one ritual bowl for personal worship. The bowl shall be made of clay, plastic, white cedar or a comparable wood. The bowl shall be no larger than 6" wide and 2 ½" deep. The bowl may include inscriptions, designs or runic characters placed there by an approved vendor, subject to DRC approval. An Asatru inmate must obtain any ritual bowl from a DRC-approved vendor or from the commissary.
7. Religious Pictures and Drawings: An Asatru inmate may possess unframed religious drawings or pictures obtained from a DRC-approved vendor. The religious drawings or pictures obtained from an approved vendor may include inscriptions, designs, or runic characters placed there by the vendor, subject to DRC approval. An Asatru inmate may copy pictures, posters, or drawings with runic characters if the picture, poster or drawing that is being copied is sold or distributed by a DRC-approved vendor. An Asatru inmate may create religious drawings and pictures that do not threaten either the security of the institution or the safety of other inmates or staff. If a religious drawing or picture contains runic characters or languages other than English, DRC may temporarily take custody of each such drawing or picture for a reasonable period of time to attempt to translate each. DRC typically should not withhold a religious picture or drawing in excess of thirty (30) calendar days. If DRC is unable to find a person who can translate a religious picture or drawing after making a reasonable effort, DRC may retain the



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religious picture or drawing or allow the inmate to send it out. DRC must inform the creator of the religious picture or drawing of that decision in writing. An Asatru inmate shall place his name and inmate number on any art work that he or she produces. An Asatru inmate must store all religious pictures and drawings in the inmate's locker when not in use for individual religious activities. An Asatru inmate may mail pictures and drawings out of the institution, including materials sent for publication, but may not receive compensation except pursuant to approval under applicable DRC rules.

8. Headbands: An Asatru inmate may wear a headband in his or her housing area during individual religious activities. The headband shall be made of linen, silk, or a comparable cloth material that shall not exceed 22" x 22". The headband shall be white or beige in color and may include characters or inscriptions placed on it by a DRC-approved vendor. The characters or inscriptions are subject to DRC approval.
9. Gandr Staff: An Asatru inmate may possess a Gandr Staff for use during individual worship. The Gandr Staff may be up to 10" in length, 7/16" inch in width, and 1/8" in thickness. The Gandr Staff may have runic characters inscribed or placed on it by a DRC-approved vendor. The characters or inscriptions are subject to DRC approval. An Asatru inmate must obtain a Gandr Staff from a DRC-approved vendor.
10. Storage of Religious Articles for Individual Worship: An Asatru inmate may use a clear plastic "shoe box" type container 7" x 15" x 5" deep to store his or her religious articles. Storage of all religious articles, with the exception of a copy of the Poetic Edda, shall be subject to the 2.4 cubic foot property limitation and other generally applicable DRC regulations.
11. Personal Mead Horn: An Asatru inmate may possess up to two (2) blunt-bottomed wooden cups, or other DRC-approved cups, to serve as a ceremonial drinking horn for individual worship. The cup shall not exceed 5" in height. An Asatru inmate shall obtain the cups from a DRC-approved vendor. The cup may include inscriptions, designs or runic characters placed there by the DRC-approved vendor. The inscriptions, designs or runic characters are subject to DRC approval. An Asatru inmate may use a cup or cups purchased from the inmate commissary.
12. Personal Oath Ring: An Asatru inmate may possess one (1) personal oath ring, the approximate size of a wedding band. The personal oath ring may include inscriptions, designs or runic characters placed there by a DRC-approved vendor. The inscriptions, designs or runic characters are subject to DRC approval.
13. Personal Journal: An Asatru inmate may maintain a personal handwritten journal as part of the inmate's individual religious exercise. The journal shall be written in the Asatru inmate's own handwriting, and it may include runic characters. The journal shall be identified with the Asatru inmate's name and number on the cover. No Asatru inmate may remove any pages from his or her journal unless the Asatru inmate places his or her name and number on each page he or she removes from the journal. The journal shall be stored in the locker box or other personal storage area when not in use, and it shall remain in the inmate's personal possession at all times when it is not in the locker box. Any journal that contains language other than English may not be shared with or given to any

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another inmate. If a journal contains runic characters or languages other than English, DRC may temporarily take custody of it for a reasonable period of time, not to exceed thirty (30) calendar days, to attempt to translate it. If DRC is unable to find a person who can translate the journal after making a reasonable effort, DRC may retain the journal. DRC must inform the journal's author of that decision in writing.

#### **F. Major Asatru Religious Holidays**

There are twelve (12) major Asatru religious holidays recognized under this policy, one per month. Group worship services shall be scheduled by DRC to coincide with these days to the extent possible. The parties further recognize that four (4) of the twelve (12) holy days are high feast days. The high feast days are Ostara (spring equinox, March 20<sup>th</sup>), Midyear (summer solstice, June 21<sup>st</sup>), Winter finding (autumnal equinox, September 21<sup>st</sup>) and Yule (Winter solstice, December 21<sup>st</sup>).

#### **G. Work Proscriptions**

1. Asatru inmates are not required to work on the four (4) high feast days. To be excused for the entire day on a high feast day, an Asatru inmate must timely submit a request to the chaplain's office pursuant to Department policy 72-REG-02, Religious Accommodations, for the entire day he or she wants off.
2. There are eight (8) other holy days recognized under this policy. Asatru inmates are not excused from work for the entire day on these eight (8) holy days.
3. To be excused from work to attend group worship on these eight (8) holy days, an Asatru inmate must submit a timely request to the chaplain's office pursuant to Department Policy 72-REG-02, Religious Accommodations.

#### **H. Diet**

There are no special requirements.

#### **I. Medical Treatment**

There are no restrictions.